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ABSTRACT

In an effort to address the problem of developing constructive suggestions for change in teacher education programs, a survey was taken of the member institutions of the California Council on the Education of Teachers, which offered a basic teaching credential. The survey found all institutions used multiple admission criteria; virtually none routinely accepted students whose grade point average (GPA) was less than 2.5; about two-thirds required a personal interview, letters of recommendation, and a writing sample (or passage of the College Level English Placement test), and some work experience with children. There appeared to be no substantive differences in admission criteria among the California State University, the University of California, and their independent colleges, unless the programs operated only at the post-baccalaureate level, when a higher GPA might be required to coincide with admission requirements to a particular graduate school. The use of multiple admission criteria in California institutions parallels the national pattern, with the GPA being the one universal criterion used for admission. In a discussion of this, studies are cited that cast doubt on the heavy reliance on the GPA. Suggestions are made for a more refined process of selecting teacher candidates. (JMK)

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California's Problems in Operationalizing the Quest for Quality in Teacher Education

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CALIFORNIA'S PROBLEMS IN OPERATIONALIZING THE QUEST FOR QUALITY IN TEACHER EDUCATION

A major issue facing higher education in the 1980's is operationalizing the quest for quality. Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) (1982) in a survey of public institutions of higher education in thirteen western states found that eight have "announced or imposed admission requirement changes or are discussing some change for the future. The states making changes are Arizona, California, Idaho, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming . . . Some of the state institutions are requiring entering freshmen to take more academic high school courses, while others are raising the minimum high school grade point average required for admission or using a combination of factors . . . to evaluate which students are most likely to succeed in college." (WICHE, p. 11)

Consonant with this renewed emphasis on high academic standards, policy makers are suggesting or requiring that teacher education programs raise their admission standards. In the WICHE report, Pat Callan (director of the California Post-secondary Education Commission) pinpoints the problem: "Constructive collaboration should replace the fruitless rhetorical exchanges in which we attack the schools for the quality of students they send us, and they respond by criticizing universities for the quality of teachers we send them." (WICHE, p. 16) Clearly teacher education programs are under a kind of scrutiny they've never before experienced. However, they face a complex problem: they are criticized

for their product, yet the research literature is scant in suggesting definitive remedies which would ensure an improvement in the quality of teachers.

In an effort to address this problem, a survery was taken of the member institutions of the California Council on the Education of Teachers which offered a basic teaching credential. This survey sought to delineate what indicators of quality were being used by institutions to ensure that the best possible teachers were credentialed. Thirty-two out of 66 colleges (48%) responded to the survey.

SURVEY RESULTS

California State University System

The responses from the California State University system focus largely on the question of admissions indicators used to ensure qualified candidates for the basic credential. Most of these programs are oriented toward advanced undergraduates, and virtually all respondents operate student teacher model programs as opposed to the intern model design.

Fourteen of the nineteen campuses responded in one form or the other, giving the survey a 74% response rate. All respondents reported their minimum required overall GPA admission requirement, and all but one stipulated it to be 2.5 (out of a 4.0 maximum) with many campuses requiring a 2.75 or better in the teaching major or in the last two years of work. Over half of the campuses reported their actual mean GPA for admitted candidates, and that figure ranged from 2.75 to 3.15.

Of the fourteen campuses reporting specific requirements for admission other than GPA, all require submission of official transcripts; ten require a writing sample or successful passage of the College Level English Placement (CLEP) test or its campus equivalent, letters of

recommendation from three to four sources, a personal interview with a member of the faculty, and some work experiences with children. Half the campuses require a formal speech test.

At this point, little else can generally be discussed about the quality efforts of the California State University institutions because the data are not available. It is known that many individual institutions have elaborate systems for monitoring student progress, screening master teachers and making credential decisions, but the lack of commonality among the institutions on any one item makes it impossible to generalize on these topics. Further efforts are definitely needed to develop the data base, especially data on measuring quality of performance during student teaching and on efforts made to do graduate follow-ups and program evaluation.

Independent Colleges

Fourteen out of forty possible institutions submitted materials or completed questionnaires, giving the survey a 35% response rate for this group. The respondents report requiring an average minimum GPA of 2.6 (ranging from a 2.0 to a 3.0). In 60% of the institutions, a higher GPA was required in the teaching area--typically a 2.75.

Other criteria used for admission include letters of recommendation (three to four), field experience with children, interviews, writing samples, GRE scores for the graduate level programs, and math and English tests. All of the respondents require some combination of the above criteria with letters of recommendation, interviews, experience with children, and writing sample appearing most often.

The actual selection of candidates appears most often to be a committee action. One institution involves students on that committee;

the remainder have faculty committees.

All programs report that both the master teacher and college supervisor submit regular reports on the work of the student teacher. Weekly visits are the norm and all colleges report requiring a minimum number of visits (usually 10). All of the student teaching programs report dual assignments. About a third of the programs require related academic coursework during student teaching. In two-thirds of the program, the students' energies are focused on teaching and the concurrent seminar; no other outside coursework is taken at this time. These courses appear to be clinic-seminar type courses or practicum courses oriented toward helping student teachers develop better lesson plans and course materials. Half of the programs require students to submit their teaching materials as a part of program completion.

The recommendation for the credential remains a college decision in all but one program. It appears that the evaluation of the master teacher is given substantial weight, but that the college bears the ultimate responsibility.

University of California System

As with the other two groups surveyed, the University of California system data focus on admissions criteria. Additional information was received on programmatic efforts at quality control involving program evaluation by students, graduates, and employers of graduates.

Four of the seven University of California campuses that have credential programs responded to the questionnaire. Virtually all the respondents require a 3.0 GPA in the last 90 units of undergraduate work.[1]

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[1] Authors did not have access to data regarding campus mean GPA'a in the University of California system.

One of the campuses gave a four year (1977-81) mean GPA (3.13) for all admitted students. This average compares favorably with those campuses of the California State University system which reported the mean GPA of students actually admitted and with the independent colleges. It should be remembered that most of the University of California campuses operate graduate level programs so the slightly higher admission GPA is understandable.

As with the other respondents, all the University of California campuses reporting indicate multiple criteria in the admission process. Typical criteria are (in order of frequency): experience with children or youth, interviews, letters of recommendation, and special abilities such as bilinguality.

All of the programs use some type of checklist to assure classroom teaching competency. Typically both the college supervisor and the master teacher are involved in the assessment of these skills. Student teachers are required to demonstrate more than one teaching model in two of the programs. Other competencies required of students include writing ability and speech/oral reading competency.

The supervising load for the college supervisor varies widely. One program reported a 22:1 ratio while another reported an 11:1 ratio. Generally, each student is visited between once per week and once every other week. It is not clear how long such visits last, but one class period or its equivalent appears typical.

All the programs require formal student evaluations from the master teachers and all require course evaluations. Half require employer evaluations of their graduates and all regularly poll graduates on program effectiveness.

DISCUSSION

There appear to be many commonalities among all institutions which responded to the survey. All use multiple admission criteria; virtually none routinely accept students whose undergraduate GPA is less than 2.5; about two-thirds require a personal interview, letters of recommendation and a writing sample (or passage of the CLEP), and some work experience with children. There appear to be no substantive differences in admission criteria among the California State University, the University of California, and the independent colleges unless the programs operate only at the post-baccalaureate level, when a higher GPA may be required to coincide with admission requirements to a particular graduate school.

In comparison, a survey of member institutions of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (Carpenter, 1973) revealed the following breakdown of minimum GPA required for admission:

2.0 or less	48%
2.1 to 2.25	31.5%
2.26 to 2.5	13.5%

The use of multiple admission criteria in California institutions parallels the national pattern. Shank (1978) noted the following breakdown of frequency of admission criterion usage:

Grade Point Average	96.8%
Language Proficiency	77.5%
Interviews	53.8%
Biographic Information	52.2%

Personality & Value Measures	43.7%
Letters of Reference	41.8%
Completion of Two Years of Undergraduate Work	27.3%
Standardized Tests	23.1%
Quota Systems	4.3%

The differences which do exist, apart from the higher GPA required by California institutions relative to those reported by Carpenter, appear to be the relative emphasis placed on each of the entrance criteria and the degree to which institutions, although they have established minimum criteria, in fact employ more stringent requirements due to a large applicant pool. This survey was unable to determine precisely the actual admission practices at each institution; it relied on formal published minimum criteria and did not determine actual characteristics of admitted students.

Since the one universal criterion used for admission is the GPA, it is important to explore the meaning of this statistic. The most comprehensive data available for analysis are from the California State University system (Whitesel, 1981). Because the California State University produces the bulk of teacher candidates in the state, this information is doubly useful as the reference point for this discussion. These data raise several questions concerning the usefulness of the universality of the GPA criterion. In Table 1 the range of mean undergraduate GPAs across the nineteen California State University institutions is shown.

The data in Table 1 clearly indicate that a 2.5 GPA applicant to a teacher education program who graduated from a campus at the high end

TABLE 1

RANK ORDER OF CAMPUSES

BY AVERAGE LETTER GRADE

AWARDED SPRING 1981

(A = 4.0)

Undergraduate Courses

Campus	GPA	Campus	GPA
Sonoma	3.07	San Luis Obispo	2.78
Calexico	3.04	Chico	2.77
Stanislaus	2.96	All Campuses	2.76
Dominguez Hills	2.90	Pomona	2.73
Sacramento	2.90	San Jose	2.72
Hayward	2.88	Los Angeles	2.71
Humboldt	2.81	Northridge	2.69
Fresno	2.81	Bakersfield	2.68
San Francisco	2.81	Fullerton	2.66
Long Beach	2.79	San Diego	2.62
San Bernardino	2.79		

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25 November 1981

TABLE 2

RANK ORDER OF UNDERGRADUATE MAJORS BY CUMULATIVE CAMPUS GPA FROM SPRING 1977

Discipline Division	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Foreign Languages	3.02	2.97	2.99	2.97	2.99
Health Professions	2.91	2.92	2.93	2.95	2.95
Letters	2.96	2.95	2.94	2.93	2.93
Fine & Applied Arts	2.93	2.93	2.91	2.89	2.89
Area Studies	2.97	2.93	2.94	2.88	2.94
Psychology	2.88	2.88	2.85	2.86	2.85
Interdisciplinary	2.85	2.85	2.82	2.84	2.82
Home Economics	2.82	2.81	2.81	2.81	2.76
Mathematics	2.83	2.84	2.78	2.77	2.72
Social Sciences	2.77	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.74
Communications	2.76	2.77	2.74	2.74	2.72
Architecture	2.69	2.75	2.76	2.72	2.74
Education	2.74	2.74	2.73	2.71	2.71
All Programs	2.75	2.74	2.72	2.71	2.69
Physical Sciences	2.74	2.74	2.72	2.70	2.68
Public Affairs & Services	2.71	2.71	2.71	2.70	2.70
Biological Sciences	2.68	2.69	2.60	2.66	2.66
Information Science	2.71	2.71	2.67	2.65	2.64
Agriculture	2.66	2.68	2.62	2.61	2.57
Business & Management	2.61	2.62	2.61	2.61	2.60
Undeclared	2.63	2.60	2.59	2.58	2.57
Engineering	2.57	2.60	2.56	2.57	2.56

Source: Spring ERSS Census File
Rank order of majors based on 1981 data

TCSUC - Institutional Research
20 November 1980

of the scale shows substantially different academic achievement than one from a college at the lower end of the GPA scale. Very simply, some colleges give higher grades than others.

Another problem confounding the use of the GPA criterion is the fact that mean GPAs are variable according to academic major. Table 2 depicts this problem while Table 3 shows the relationship of the minimum entrance GPA to mean undergraduate GPAs on the thirteen campuses reporting data. The implications of the data in Table 2 and 3 may be that the use of a single minimum GPA standard admits some less qualified candidates while denying admission to some potentially promising teacher candidates simply by virtue of the grades awarded in their particular academic major.

Recent evidence in California further substantiates this view. The California Basic Education Skills Test (an ETS administered examination required as of February, 1983 for issuance of a basic teaching credential) was administered to 2,727 graduates of the California State University system in December, 1982. The percentage of students from each campus who passed the exam bears no relationship to the mean GPA from each campus. Attainment of proficiency in basic skills does not clearly relate to high or low campus grade point average.

The fact that no relationship was found again suggests that GPA simply may not be a particularly sensitive measure given the variability among campuses of the California State University system and among the various academic majors offered on each of those campuses. In fact, the question, at a very crude analysis level, produces a 2 x 2 decision matrix.

TABLE 3

RELATIONSHIP OF MINIMUM ENTRANCE GPA

TO CAMPUS MEAN GPA

Campus	Mean Undergraduate GPA by Campus	Multi-Subject Minimum GPA	Single Subject Minimum GPA	Difference Between Mean Campus GPA & Minimum Credential GPA
Dominguez Hills	2.90	2.50	2.50	-.40
Sacramento	2.90	2.50	2.50	-.40
Hayward	2.88	2.50(2.75 in major)	2.50(2.75 in major)	-.38(-.13)
Humboldt	2.82	2.50	2.50	-.32
Long Beach	2.79	2.75	2.75	-.04
San Bernardino	2.79	2.50	2.50	-.29
Chico	2.77	2.50	2.50	-.27
Pomona	2.73	2.50	2.50	-.23
Los Angeles	2.71	2.50	2.50	-.21
Northridge	2.69	2.50	2.50	-.19
Bakersfield	2.68	2.50	2.50(3.0 in major)	-.18(+.32)
Fullerton	2.66	2.50	2.75(3.0 in major)	-.16(+.09)
San Diego	2.62	2.50	not reported	-.12

Tough Campus Tough Major	Tough Campus Easy Major
Easy Campus Tough Major	Easy Campus Easy Major

We found no evidence that any campus is systematically using this level of GPA analysis in making admission decisions. Anecdotal information suggests that knowledgeable program coordinators do take these data into account when they have access to the information. However, it is not at all apparent that such information is widely available, nor is it feasible, under current budget and personnel constraints, to expect this level of sophistication in admission decisions. The California State University system benefits from a high degree of centralization and could generate such data on a routine basis. The possibility of the various University of California campuses or the independent colleges generating such data is less likely. Moreover, it is uncertain that all institutions would be willing to share data that are potentially embarrassing. The ability of state level agencies to collect and disseminate comparative data about post-secondary educations is, historically, quite limited. It appears unlikely that additional funds will be forthcoming for such efforts. Furthermore, the authors of the WICHE report suggest that heavy reliance on GPA may result in students taking predominately those courses that are perceived as "easy A's" as opposed to those more academically demanding.

A study done in 1977 by Barnes, Blaisdell, and Hill casts further doubt on the heavy reliance on GPA. This study examined the relationship of various entrance criteria to a particular teacher education program and found that none of the admission criteria, including GPA, were significantly related to success in student teaching. This finding, relative to GPA as

a predictor of success in student teaching, was also found in studies by Haberman (1976), Wiseman (1973), and Brodbelt (1973.) Haberman states that, "These criteria merely predict students' future success as students and do not predict teaching success" (1977, p. 235.) Eash and Rasher (1977), however, did find GPA a significant success predictor.

The other criteria that appear to be used in most teacher education admission policies, at this point, defy comment. In his literature review on five admission criteria (biographical data, interviews, letters of recommendation, interest and personality measures), Breland (1981) noted that biographical data and interest measures were the most consistently reliable and valid.

However, we know little about how these criteria are actually employed: Is the interview structured or not, rated quantitatively or not, individual or group, etc.? Are the letters of recommendation quantified in some fashion, used only as an extreme measure, etc.? Is the writing sample actually graded or scanned only for obvious incompetence? Is the nature and extent of the candidate's work experience with children scrutinized? Second, even if we did now the answers to these questions, we have insufficient research to enable us to employ any set of criteria with a degree of certainty with regard to success in teaching. The problem of operationalizing the quest for quality remains.

With respect to those criteria used to decide which students, once admitted, will be recommended for the credential, the survey indicated (based on data from 48% of the California IHE's) that some form of competency checklist is used to ensure that the candidates are meeting each of the program requirements for the fieldwork portion of the credential program. Success in teacher education coursework appears to

be necessary to proceed to student teaching; decisions regarding success in student teaching seem generally to be jointly made by the master teacher and university or college supervisor, but ultimate responsibility for determination of successful completion of student teaching rests with the IHE.

CONCLUSIONS

Cursory examinations of the survey data lead us to believe that teacher education programs in California are all very similar. Common sense and conversations with colleagues tell us they are not. One can draw various conclusions: 1) either the universe of admission criteria to teacher education programs is much smaller than we had thought; or, 2) the variables determined by the questionnaire were not discriminatory (we simply may have asked the wrong questions); or, 3) the criteria acknowledged by the programs are not in fact adhered to. The question to be asked here is, do the admitted candidates actually look strikingly like the minimum profile or do they exceed it significantly? For example, at California State University, Sacramento, the minimum required GPA is 2.50 but in Fall 1981 the mean overall GPA for multiple and single subjects admitted (N=215) was 3.12. At California State University, Long Beach, the minimum required GPA is 2.75; in Spring 1979 the mean overall GPA for all credential students was 3.13. California State University, Chico reports a required minimum or 2.50 and an actual mean for multiple subjects, 2.9 (N=65). At Cal Poly Pomona the required minimum is 2.50, yet the mean GPA of all entrants over a four year period was 2.9 (N=891).

One definite conclusion to be made is that teacher education programs in California are not drawing candidates from the bottom of the academic barrel; we don't know how close to the bottom we are, however, or for that

matter, how deep the barrel actually is. Given the evidence described above, it is hard to pinpoint this. It is ironic that even if we knew how teacher candidates compared on any number of variables to other college students, it would not necessarily aid us in ensuring higher quality teachers. We know from the research that there are several personal qualities which effective teachers possess and several teaching skills which relate to student achievement. What we don't know is how, in a cost effective way, to screen either for the inherent personal qualities or for the poetential to learn the skills. We can conclude, however, that IHE's in California do not take the issue of admission to teacher education programs lightly. Although all appear to rely heavily on GPA, they do use multiple criteria for decisions and have definite measures to screen out of programs people who are performing unsatisfactorily.

If money and time were not constraints, we could create a fairly elaborate system for selecting teacher candidates. In addition to the types of information the reporting institutions already gather, the type of comparative data on GPA (discusssed on page 6) and its contextual importance would be useful. Further, we suggest four more variables:

1) Observational data on candidates' teaching performance;
2) Multiply scored writing samples;
3) Confirmation of statements in recommendation letters;
4) Actual class level ratings showing relative student performance within each class taken.[1]

The current policy thrust of the California legislature is far from these notions. It appears more interested in standardized tests as a

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[1]California State University, Fullerton now reports such data on its student transcript.

means of improving quality. It is clear that all the parties concerned with quality in teacher education are eager to create policies that will ensure high quality teachers. What is unclear is the degree of cooperation among these institutions in generating research based procedures for operationalizing that common quest.

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